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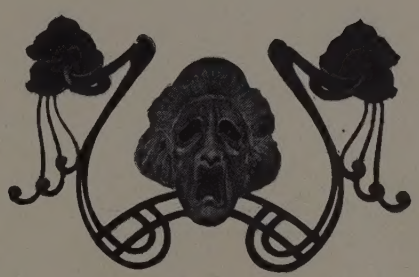

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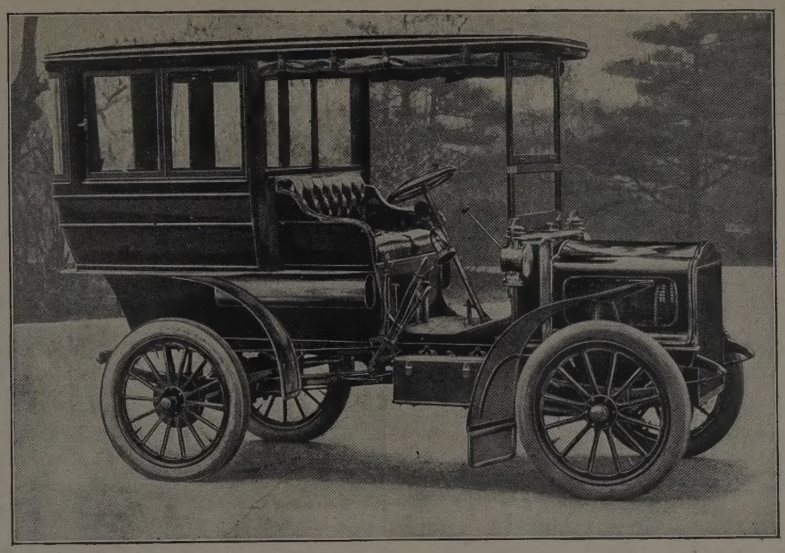

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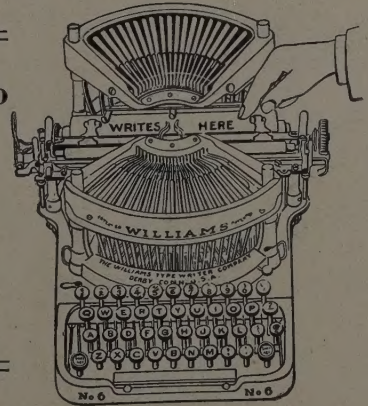

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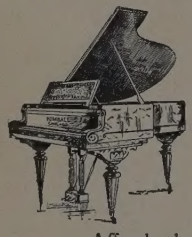

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New Dramatic Books

THE SIN OF DAVID; *poetic play in three acts.* By STEPHEN PHILLIPS, *author of "Ulysses," etc. New York: The Macmillan Company.*

Stephen Phillips is a master of modern verse and is unfailingly interesting from the literary point of view; but in this instance the story is so simple and the complications so few that the practical dramatic value of the play is not conspicuous. The period of the action is that of the English civil war between Charles I. and the Parliament. Sir Hubert Lisle assumes command of the Parliamentary forces in the Fenland. One of his first acts was to confirm the sentence of death on an officer who had betrayed or forced a maid. This is purely incidental, and in the nature of a prologue; the beginning of the action being that he immediately falls in love with the young wife of Colonel Mardyke, who chafes under the restraints of a master whom, in the disparity of their years, she does not love. Sir Hubert yields to the temptation of sending this husband to certain death in a mission which he confides to his valor. The third act finds Sir Hubert and Miriam, the wife, married; five years have elapsed; they are happy in devotion to their child. The child dies. They accept the bereavement as a penalty, and determine

"That though the child shall not return to us,
Yet shall we two together go to him."

For the first time they are truly man and wife. The subject is not unworthy, the sentiment is true, but from a dramatic point of view the play finally lapses into mere verbal expression. Indeed, is not this phrasing and fine writing an evil when considered with reference to the drama? Is not the consciousness of the author of his swinging style the very converse of drama? Sir Hubert prays that his child, his son, be spared:

"What crime committed save the being born?
Then must my sin cancel for him the light,
Put out the recent sunbeam, and make blank
The murmurs and the splendors of the world?"

Miriam says:

"This bosom, very snow from hills of Hell,
This flesh which still I wear whispered you on?"

Again:

"Away! to live with all dumb things that yearn.
I'll nest with thee, thou mother bird returned,
I feel thy dreadful circlings in my blood.
I'll be the friend of the robbed lioness;
Above me, lo! the unhindered desert moon!"

This, no doubt, is very fine in sound, but it is many an unhindered moon since women have been friendly with robbed lionesses and men with Hyrcan tigers. But it makes good reading; it is brave and exalted; it is "building the lofty line." Simply that we may hear what it sounds like on the stage, we should like some manager to make the experiment of producing the play and the lines on the stage. In "Herod," Phillips has written a drama of real power; in "The Sin of David" he has fallen too much and too often into verbalism.

THE FLORENTINES. *A play.* By MAURICE V. SAMUELS. *New York: Brentano's. 1904.*

This is an uncommonly good play in verse and actable into the bargain. Mr. Samuels does not play with words for the sake of fine writing, yet many of the passages are in the manner of the deft artificer in precious stones, Benvenuto Cellini, about whom the action of the play turns. The character of the braggart of a genius, skilled with his sword, fond of adventure, fearing neither man nor rank, a great spirit in every way, is well sustained. The dramatic story is effective. The Duke of Florence entrusts a valuable stone to Benvenuto for his workmanship. It is stolen by his model, who is jealous of his intention to finish his statue by having the Duke's ward sit for him, her arm only being needed as a model. Her lover, his friend, misunderstands the situation; Benvenuto is accused as a thief, and various complications ensue. The first act is slow in action, and would have to be cut and changed for production, but, on the whole, the play, in its printed form, has a right to challenge attention.

HISTORY OF THE LONDON STAGE FROM 1576 TO 1903. By H. BARTON BAKER. *Second edition in one volume. Illustrated. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.*

This is a very interesting book and should have a place in every theatrical library. It practically tells the whole story of theatricals in England from the middle of the sixteenth century down

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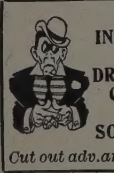

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JUDITH OF BETHULIA. *A tragedy in blank verse.* By THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH. *98 pages. Illustrated. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.*

A critical review of this play, which is now issued in handsome book form, will be found on page 1 of this issue of the THEATRE MAGAZINE. In a preface, Mr. Aldrich informs us that the piece was written for Miss Nance O'Neil, and is in part a dramatization of his narrative poem, "Judith and Holofernes." He adds, however, that although it contains lines and passages from the story, the drama is essentially a distinct work, dealing with characters, incidents and situations not to be found in the poem or in the apocryphal episode upon which both pieces are based. An instance of the difficulties dramatic authors often encounter in carrying out their ideas on the stage is found in the poet's explicit stage directions at the end of Act III. Judith, after cutting off Holofernes' head, issues from the tent, throwing away the bloody sword. Marah goes into the tent. Judith stands motionless for a moment with both hands pressed against her eyes as if to shut out some appalling spectacle. Marah emerges from the pavilion bearing the head of Holofernes enveloped in the mantle. When it came to carrying out these suggestions of the author, it was, of course, found that it was impracticable to do so, and the scene on the stage closes with Judith's line to Marah: "'Tis done, do thou!"

Fox, Duffield & Co. will shortly issue a collection of "Letters of Henrik Ibsen." The translation into English is the work of John Nilsen Laurvik, and a preliminary installment of it appears in the current number of *The International Quarterly*. The entire collection, which has been made by a son of the great dramatist, covers a period of about fifty years, from 1849 to 1898. Among those to whom letters are addressed are King Charles of Sweden, Georg Brandes, the Danish critic; Björnstjerne Björnson, William Archer, and Edmond Gosse, as well as an interesting circle of less celebrated friends.

Books Received

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM. *A miracle play. Adapted to modern conditions by* CHARLES MILLS GAYLEY. *New York: Fox Duffield & Company.*

A FRIEND AT COURT. *A romance.* By JESSIE EMERSON MOFFAT. *New York: William Ritchie.*

LIFE OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. By WILLIAM J. ROLFE, LITT. D. *538 pages. Illustrated. Boston: Dana, Estes & Co.*

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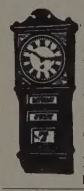

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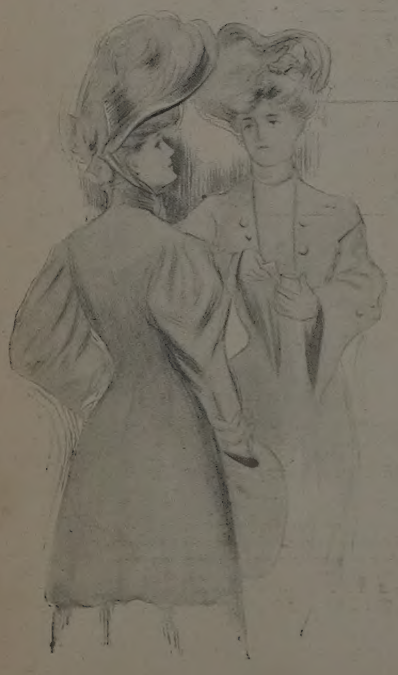
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